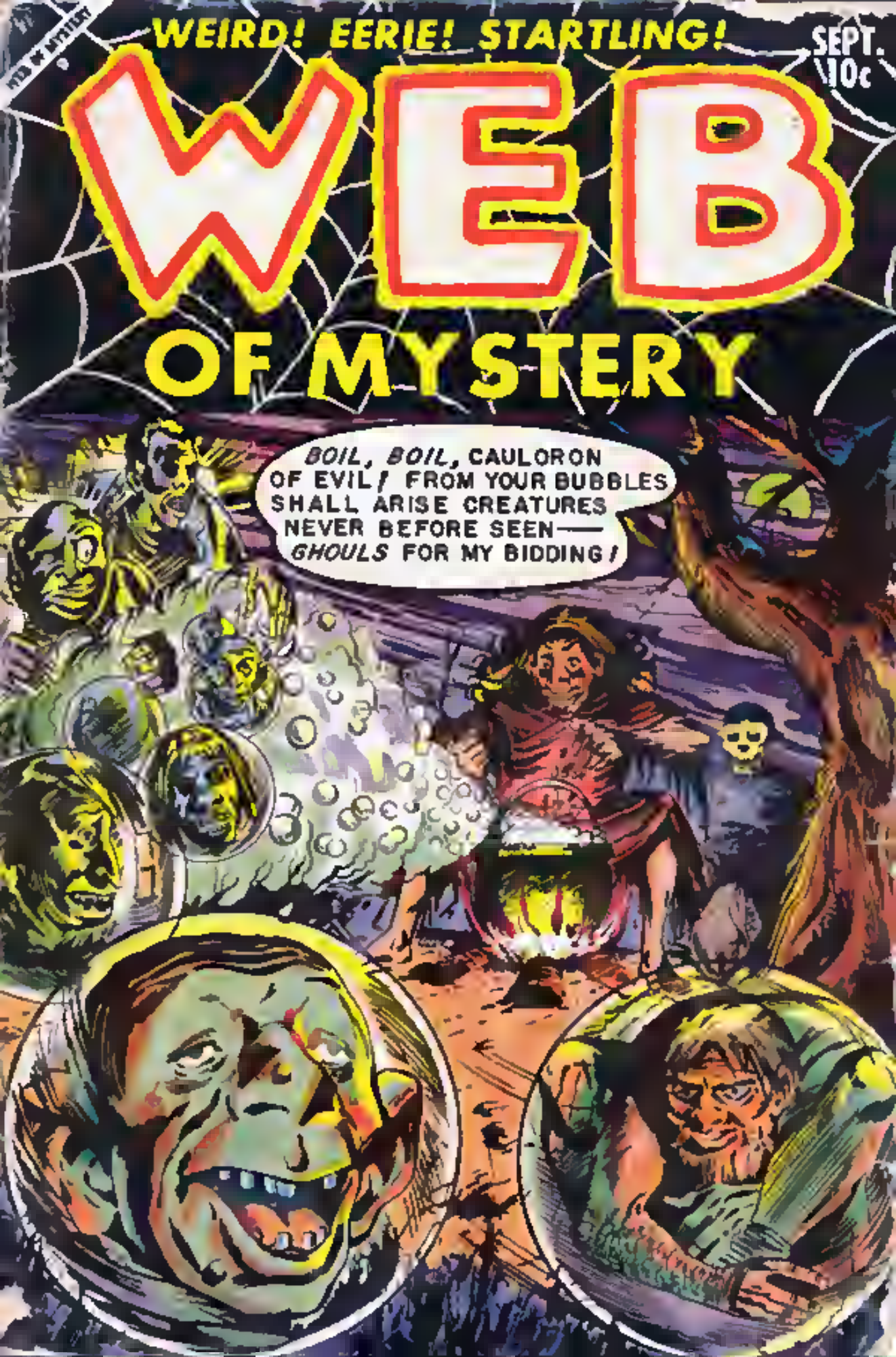
WEIRD! EERIE! STARTLING!

SEPT. 10¢

WEB OF MYSTERY



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Comfo-Gard

THE AMAZING NEW MENSTRUAL SHIELD THAT GIVES SURE, SAFE PROTECTION DIFFERENTLY

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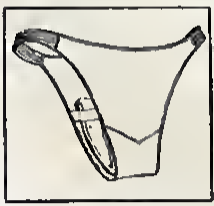

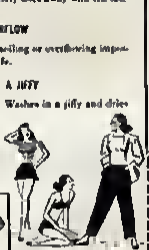

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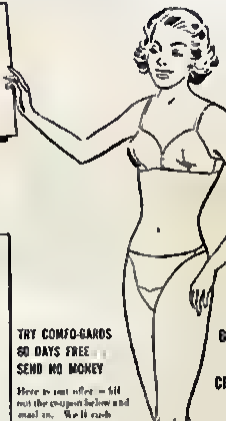

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Here is our offer — fill out the coupon below and mail us. We'll rush Comfo-Cards to you in an unmarked package. Take 60 days to decide whether you wish to keep Comfo-Cards. If not a full refund of the purchase price will be made immediately.

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Please rush two (2) Comfo-Cards in a plain
I will pay postman only $1.98 plus postage. I
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My waist size is_____

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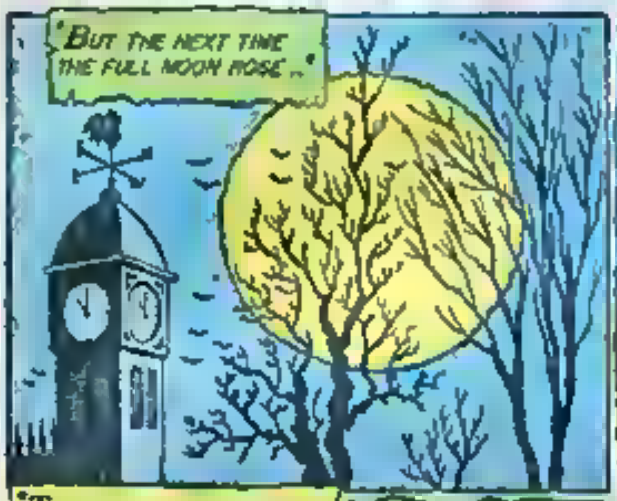
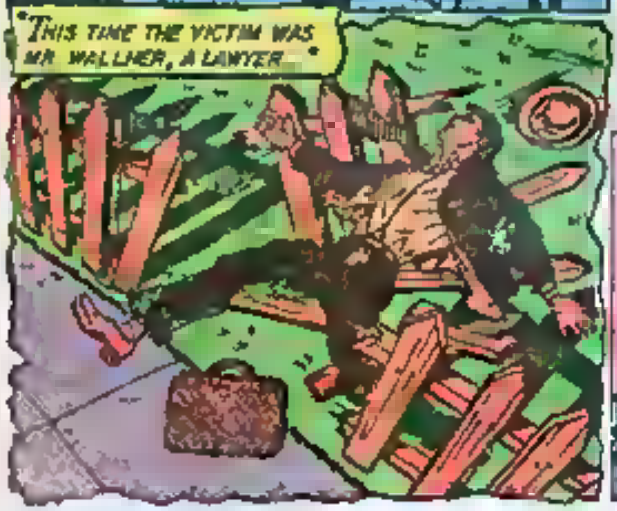
MEMO
EDITOR to PUBLISHER
This story showed up in today's mail—unsigned—no return address, lots of blood on the envelope. Shall we?
PRINT IT! ONLY FAIR THAT THE PUBLIC BE WARNED THAT ANYBODY—NO MATTER HOW INNOCENT-APPEARING—MIGHT BE A VAMPIRE!
Out of the BLACK NIGHT
"I AM MISS ALLBRIGHT. I TEACH THE SECOND GRADE AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL ON HAWELL LANE. THIS IS A FINE TOWN—NOT TOO MUCH TRAFFIC, THE LAWNS ARE WELL-TENDED BUT—SHHHHH—BETTER LET ME WHISPER THIS INTO YOUR EAR... THERE IS A VAMPIRE AMONG US!"
"HEAVEN KNOWS HOW LONG THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON. AFTER ALL, I'VE BEEN IN THIS TOWN ONLY SIX MONTHS. BUT THE FIRST I KNEW OF IT, WAS THE NIGHT DR. SWEDER WAS ATTACKED.
DR. SWEDER WAS FOUND THE NEXT MORNING, COMPLETELY DRAINED OF BLOOD, WITH TWO NEAT LITTLE PUNCTURES IN HIS THROAT.

I MUST CONFESS THAT AT THE TIME, I HELD THE ROLE OF THE SKEPTIC . . .
REALLY, GENTLEMEN, THIS IS THE 20th CENTURY! VAMPIRES ! HOW ABSURD CAN YOU GET? DO YOU REALIZE THE PANIC THAT WILL SPREAD IF YOU KEEP TALKING THIS WAY? THINK OF YOUR WIVES AND YOUR CHILDREN . . !

"I ALWAYS WAS A CONVINCING SPEAKER . THE POLICE PROMISED TO HANDLE THE MATTER AS A ROUTINE MURDER . .
LUCKY FOR US THAT MISS ALLBRIGHT HAS A STEADY HEAD ON HER SHOULDERS . .


"BUT THE NEXT TIME THE FULL MOON ROSE . .

THE VAMPIRE STRUCK AGAIN!!"


"THIS TIME THE VICTIM WAS MR. WALLNER, A LAWYER . .

"AND WHEN MR. WALLNER WAS FOUND THE NEXT MORNING, COMPLETELY DRAINED OF BLOOD, WITH THE SAME TWO NEAT LITTLE PUNCTURES IN HIS THROAT, THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD SAY . .
I — I FEEL FAINT
THERE'S NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT . SOMEBODY IN THIS TOWN IS A VAMPIRE!

"THAT NIGHT, A SEARCHING PARTY WAS ORGANIZED. CARRYING TORCHES AND ARMED WITH STEEL SPIKES, THE MEN ROAMED THE FIELDS ALL AROUND THE TOWN . .

"BUT WHEN MORNING CAME, THEY TRUDGED SLOWLY BACK — DISCOURAGED AND EMPTY-HANDED."

WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO NOW...?

NOTHING TO DO BUT PATROL THE STREETS AT NIGHT, AND KEEP ALL WOMEN AND CHILDREN INDOORS.

"AFTER THAT, EVERYTHING WAS QUIET FOR A WHILE. WHEN TWO MONTHS PASSED AND THE VAMPIRE HAD NOT STRUCK AGAIN, TENSE NERVES BEGAN TO SLACKEN. PEOPLE WALKED SMILING THROUGH THE STREETS AGAIN, AND THE NIGHT PATROLS WERE DISCONTINUED."

"IT WAS JUST ABOUT THEN THAT THIS NEW LITTLE BOY CAME TO SCHOOL. HIS NAME WAS JETHROE TURNER. HE HAD A PALE, SENSITIVE FACE WITH LIPS THAT WERE REMARKABLY FULL AND A BRILLIANT RED."

CHILDREN, JETHROE IS YOUR NEW CLASSMATE, AND I WANT YOU ALL TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH HIM.

"THEN, JUST SO THE CHILDREN WOULD CONSIDER HIM LESS OF A STRANGER, I ASKED LITTLE JETHROE SOME QUESTIONS."

JETHROE, I WANT YOU TO TELL US ALL ABOUT YOURSELF. NOW FIRST — WHAT SORT OF WORK DOES YOUR DADDY DO? IS HE A CARPENTER, A LAWYER, A MILKMAN...?

"JETHROE SAID, 'NO', TO ALL MY GUESSES AND THEN HE RAISED HIMSELF ON TIPTOE, AND WHISPERED INTO MY EAR."

MY DADDY IS A VAMPIRE!

"I MUST CONFESS THAT I WAS TERRIBLY SHOCKED. FOR A MOMENT, IN FACT, I LOST MY COMPOSURE."

YOU NAUGHTY BOY! THAT'S A HORRID FIB! YOU MUST NEVER, NEVER GO AROUND SAYING THINGS LIKE THAT ABOUT YOUR DADDY!

BUT IT'S TRUE (SOB). IT'S REALLY TRUE.

STOP SAYING IT! I DON'T EVER WANT TO HEAR YOU SAY IT AGAIN!

I SUDDENLY FELL INTO SILENCE: BOTH THE CHILD AND I WERE TOO UPSET TO PRESS THE MATTER ANY FURTHER ... THAT AFTERNOON, WHEN JETHROE LEFT, I WATCHED HIM THROUGH THE WINDOW

HE ... DOES ... LOOK SOMEHOW ... DIFFERENT

"WHEN EVENING CAME, I WROTE A VERY TACTFUL NOTE TO LITTLE JETHROE'S FATHER, ASKING HIM TO COME SEE ME AT SCHOOL"

THERE'LL BE TERRIBLE TROUBLE IF THE BOY GOES AROUND SAYING THINGS LIKE THAT

"I HAD A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE THAT NIGHT. I DREAMT THAT JETHROE AND HIS FATHER HAD ME CORNERED AT THE DEAD END OF A SHADOWY STREET"

"I SCREAMED, BUT THEY KEPT MOVING CLOSER AND CLOSER"

"AND THEN--THANK HEAVEN--I WAS AWAKE, DRENCHED WITH PERSPIRATION, MY LANDLADY SHAKING MY SHOULDER"

SSS ALLRIGHT, WHAT'S THE MATTER?! I HEARD YOU SCREAM NO ... I CAME RUNNING

N—NOTHING ... JUST A BAD DREAM PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE.

"I GAVE JETHROE THE NOTE FOR HIS FATHER THE NEXT MORNING. A WHOLE WEEK PASSED WITHOUT AN ANSWER ... IT WAS A HORRID WEEK MARRED BY NIGHTMARE AFTER NIGHTMARE. I TAUGHT MECHANICALLY, HARDLY KNOWING WHAT WAS GOING ON"

CAT ... SPELLS CAT

VERY GOOD NOW SPELL MAN...

"I HEARD ONLY WHAT THE OTHER TEACHERS WERE SAYING BUT I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. EVERY MORNING, I ASKED JETHROE IF HIS FATHER HAD READ MY NOTE. EVERY MORNING, JETHROE SAID YES -- BUT THERE WAS STILL NO ANSWER."

SOMETHING WRONG WITH MISS ALLBRIGHT? SHE'S BEEN LOOKING SICK LATELY

YES... I'VE NOTICED TOO. SHE'S BEEN WALKING AROUND IN A DAZE ALL WEEK

"THEN THE FULL MOON ROSE

ARRGHH!

AND THE VAMPIRE STRUCK AGAIN!

"THE NEXT MORNING, JETHROE BROUGHT A NOTE TO ME FROM HIS FATHER. MY HAND TREMBLED AS I UNFOLDED THE COARSE PAPER."

Thank you for your interest. I am a busy man and cannot come to school. Could you possibly spend this evening at my home?

"IT IS TIME NOW. I AM WALKING SLOWLY TOWARD JETHROE'S FATHER'S HOUSE. THE HOUSE STANDS BY ITSELF, ON A LONELY ROAD AT LEAST A THOUSAND YARDS FROM TOWN."

"BEFORE I HAVE A CHANCE TO RING, THE DOOR CREAKS SWIFTLY OPEN"

Y—YOU MUST BE JETHROE'S FATHER

MISS ALLBRIGHT? HOW NICE OF YOU TO COME. PLEASE STEP INSIDE

MY FAMILY IS AWAY. WE TWO ARE ALONE. THE PARLOR IS THIS WAY, MISS ALLBRIGHT

"WE ARE SEATED NOW, EXCHANGING MEANINGLESS AMENITIES. SLOWLY, SURREPTITIOUSLY, AS I TALK, I DRAW FROM MY POCKETBOOK THE LITTLE HAND-MIRROR THAT WILL TELL ME THE TRUTH!"

JETHROE IS... ER... A VERY REMARKABLE BOY...

BUT THEN . . .
YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE THAT, MISS ALLBRIGHT . FOR THERE WILL BE NO REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR . . AND THEN YOU WILL KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT I AM A VAMPIRE!
"HE LUNGES AT ME!"
"HE TRANSFORMS FASTER THAN ANY VAMPIRE I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE! MY NIGHTMARE IS COMING TO LIFE . . . !"
"BUT I DODGE . . AND I AM READY FOR HIM! HE RECOILS IN HORROR WHEN HE SEES HOW READY I AM . . . !"
R-RO! NO!!
YES--I TOO! I AM THE VAMPIRE OF THE TOWN! IT IS MY TOWN . . ALL ITS BLOOD IS MINE . . . ! I WILL BROOK NO INTERFERENCE BY A RIVAL
HIS REAL IDENTITY HAS DISARMED HIM
. . AND MY JAGGED TEETH DO THE REST . . !"
SLEEP WELL, JETHROE'S DADDY . . SLEEP THE DEEP SLEEP OF THE BLOODLESS

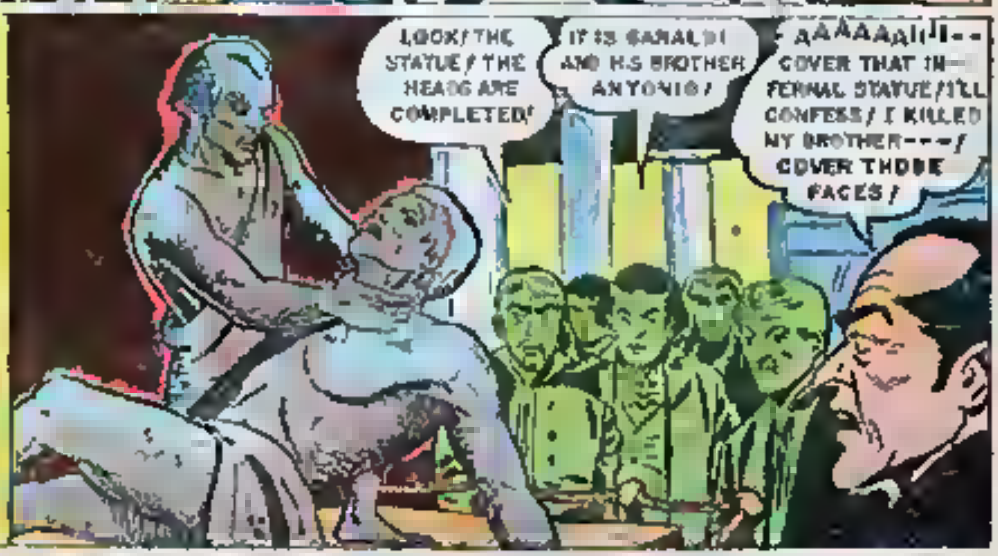
NOW, AS DEAR GENTLE MISS ALLBRIGHT AGAIN, I QUIETLY LEAVE THE HOUSE, AND WALK BACK TO TOWN
IT'S MINE! ALL THE TOWN IS MINE — WHEN HIS FAMILY RETURNS, THEY WILL UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED, AND LEAVE BEFORE DAWN
BUT SUDDENLY MY QUIVERING NERVES SNAP UNDER THE IMPACT OF A HORRIBLE SHOCK!
DEMONS, FIENDS, LOATHSOME CREATURES OF THE NIGHT! THEY KEEP SWARMING AROUND ME!
OOOOOO!! GGRRRR!
SOMEHOW I'VE BEEN FOUND OUT! SOMEHOW I'VE TRANSGRESSED A LAW OF THE HORRIBLE LIVING-DEAD! THEY'VE COME TO GET ME!!
I RUN BLINDLY, STUMBLE, FEEL MYSELF FALLING
WATCH OUT! THERE'S A SPIKED FENCE DOWN THERE!
EEEEEEIII
HELP! HELP!
THERE'S A STAKE THROUGH MY HEART — IT'S THE ONLY WAY A VAMPIRE CAN BE KILLED BY NON-VAMPIRES. DIMLY, OVERHEAD, I SEE YOUNG HORRIFIED FACES — I HEAR TREMBLING VOICES
W-WHY DID MISS ALLBRIGHT RUN THAT WAY? G-GOSH, I NEVER KNEW ANYONE TO BE SO SCARED BY MASKS AND COSTUMES
I HAVE THE STRENGTH FOR ONE LAST GRIM SMILE. WHAT A STUPID HYSTERICAL OLD FOOL I HAVE BEEN! THIS LAST WEEK. THE WEEK THAT I SPENT IN A DAZE WHILE WAITING FOR AN ANSWER FROM JETHROE'S FATHER. WAS THE WEEK BEFORE HALLOWEEN!

TRUE TALES of UNEXPLAINED MYSTERY

#31

IN THE MUSEUM OF A CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRY, THERE IS A STATUE OF TWO MEN WHICH CAUSES COMMENT FROM ALL WHO VIEW IT. BECAUSE OF AN ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE LEGEND SURROUNDING THIS PIECE OF SCULPTURE, IT HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF THE EXISTENCE OF A POWER FROM THE BEYOND. IN 1917, THE CREATOR OF THIS STATUE WAS AT WORK IN HIS STUDIO, COMPLETING HIS STRANGE MASTERPIECE.

THE MURDER OF THE SCULPTOR WAS A SHOCK TO THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY. NO CLUE TO THE KILLER WAS FOUND. BUT TO HONOR THE DEAD ARTIST, HIS INCOMPLETED WORK WAS TAKEN TO THE MUSEUM. AT THE UNVEILING, A FANTASTIC THING HAPPENED...



ANTONIO'S EVIL MIND SNAPPED AT THE SIGHT OF HIS DEAD BROTHER'S CREATION. HE MUMBLED HIS GUILT TO THE AUTHORITIES AND WAS EXECUTED FOR HIS CRIME. BUT HOW THE HEADS OF THE TWO BROTHERS CAME TO BE CARVED ON THE BLOCK OF GRANITE STILL REMAINS A DEEP, UNSOLVED MYSTERY. PERHAPS THE STRONG DESIRE OF A DEAD MAN SEEKING HIS REVENGE CAN OVERCOME THE MERE MORTAL POWERS THAT WE KNOW. WHAT DO YOU THINK, READER?

IT WAS A "THING" THAT CAME OUT OF THE DARKNESS OF THE BEYOND! WAS IT FROM THIS WORLD OR THE NEXT... A WORLD THAT HAD ALREADY DESTROYED ITSELF OR A WEIRD, TERRIFYING WORLD THAT EXISTS IN SPACE WITH OTHERS LIKE THE "THING" READY TO FOLLOW IT! CHARLES DON'T KNOW HE ONLY KNEW HE LOOKED THROUGH HIS TELESCOPE AND "IT" WAS THERE THE CREATURE HE HAD BROUGHT HERE ON THE WINGS OF HIS THOUGHT AND WHEN "IT" LEFT IT WOULD TAKE HIM WITH IT!

NO! NO! AIIIEEEE! GO AWAY!

WHAT WAS IT?

IF YOU KNOW, PLEASE, OH PLEASE, HELP US!

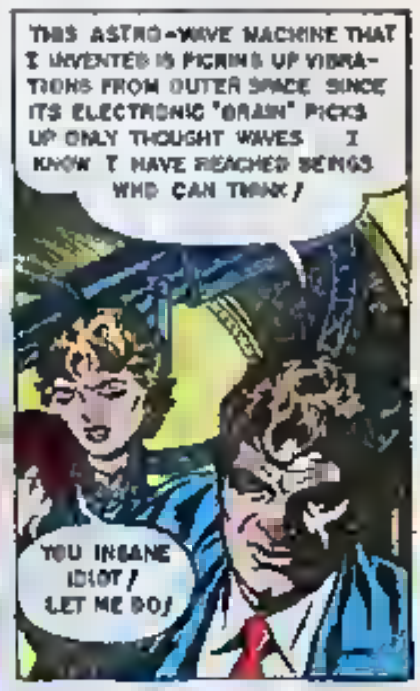
CHARLES LATHAN WAS AN ECCENTRIC YOUNG SCIENTIST WHO MIXED HIS STUDIES OF SCIENCE AND ASTRONOMY WITH DELVING INTO ANCIENT BOOKS ON ASTROLOGY AND THE OCCULT. HE HAD AN IDEA THAT A "SUPER MIND" COULD OVERCOME SPACE AND CONTACT BEINGS ON OTHER PLANETS OR IN OTHER WORLDS.

I'M TIRED OF BEING MARRIED TO A MAN WHO SPENDS HIS WHOLE LIFE SHUT UP IN A PLACE LIKE THIS! WHAT YOU REALLY NEED IS A PADDED CELL!

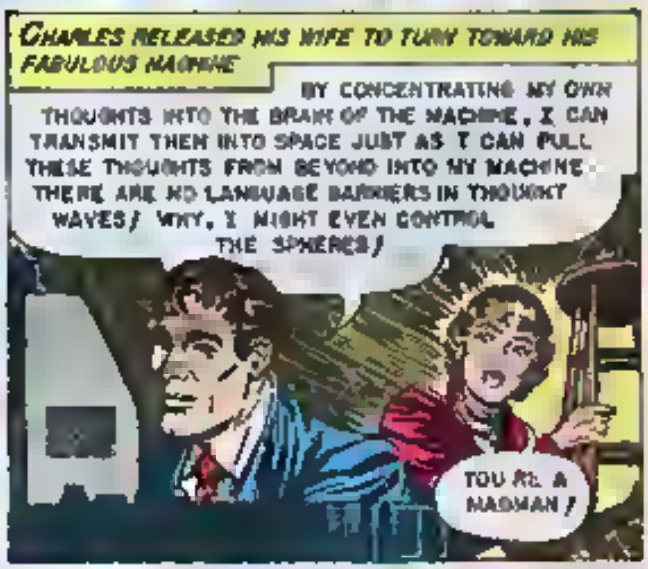
SOME DAY I'LL UNRAVEL THE MYSTERIES OF THOSE WORLDS UP THERE! THE SCIENTISTS WHO THINK ONLY OF SPACE SHIPS ARE FOOLS!

WHEN I ESTABLISH MENTAL CONTACT WITH THE CREATURES ON OTHER PLANETS I'LL LEARN SECRETS THAT'LL MAKE ME THE MOST POWERFUL MAN ON EARTH!
I'M FED UP WITH YOU AND YOUR SCREWBALL IDEAS, CHARLES! I'M GETTING OUT!

YOU MUSTN'T GO, FLORA! TONIGHT ALL THE INFLUENCES OF THE STARS ARE FAVORABLE FOR CONTACT WITH EARTH...
BAH!


THIS ASTRO-WAVE MACHINE THAT I INVENTED IS PICKING UP VIBRATIONS FROM OUTER SPACE SINCE ITS ELECTRONIC "BRAIN" PICKS UP ONLY THOUGHT WAVES I KNOW I HAVE REACHED BEINGS WHO CAN THINK!
YOU INSANE IDIOT! LET ME DO!

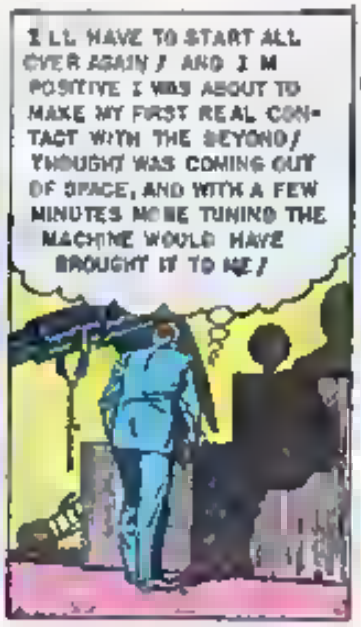
DON'T YOU HEAR THAT, FLORA? DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT IT MEANS? ALL I HAVE TO DO IS TO PULL THOSE THOUGHTS OUT OF SPACE THROUGH PROPER BEAMING OF MY MACHINE! THEN MY OWN BRAIN, THAT I TRAINED FOR THIS PURPOSE, WILL RECEIVE THEM FROM THE MACHINE!

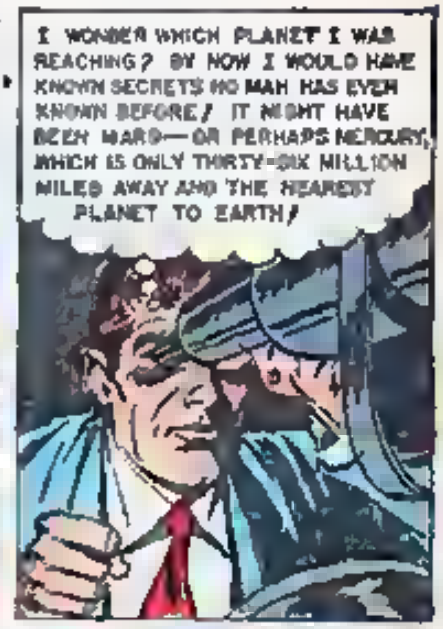

CHARLES RELEASED HIS WIFE TO TURN TOWARD HIS FABULOUS MACHINE
BY CONCENTRATING MY OWN THOUGHTS INTO THE BRAIN OF THE MACHINE, I CAN TRANSMIT THEM INTO SPACE JUST AS I CAN PULL THESE THOUGHTS FROM BEYOND INTO MY MACHINE. THERE ARE NO LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN THOUGHT WAVES! WHY, I MIGHT EVEN CONTROL THE SPHERES!
YOU'RE A MADMAN!

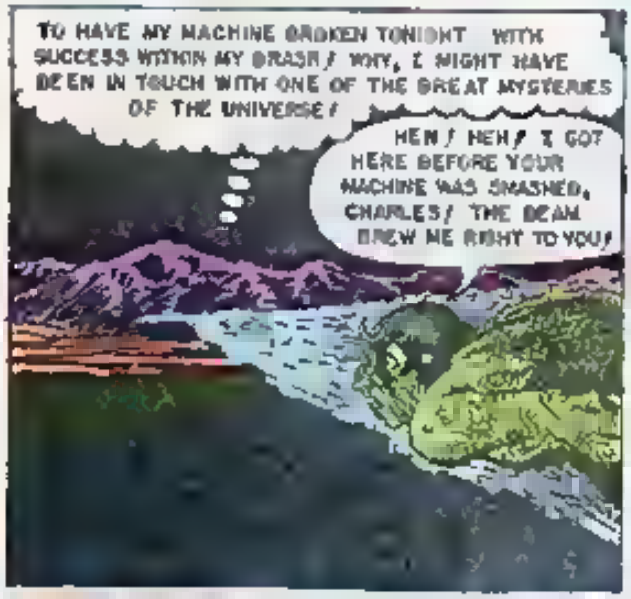
IT WAS LIKE A NIGHTMARE TO CHARLES AS HIS WIFE SUDDENLY BROUGHT THE STOOL DOWN ON HIS ASTRO-WAVE MACHINE
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOU AND YOUR MACHINE!
FLORA! NO!

IN AN INSANE FURY, CHARLES SPRANG TOWARD THE WOMAN WHO HAD RUINED HIS MACHINE
MY MACHINE! Y — YOU!
NO! AARRGH!

SHE'S DEAD! SHE NEVER REALIZED SHE'D MARRIED A MAN WHOSE POWER WOULD ONE DAY STRETCH BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF INFINITY!


I'LL HAVE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN! AND I'M POSITIVE I WAS ABOUT TO MAKE MY FIRST REAL CONTACT WITH THE BEYOND! THOUGHT WAS COMING OUT OF SPACE, AND WITH A FEW MINUTES MORE TUNING THE MACHINE WOULD HAVE BROUGHT IT TO ME!

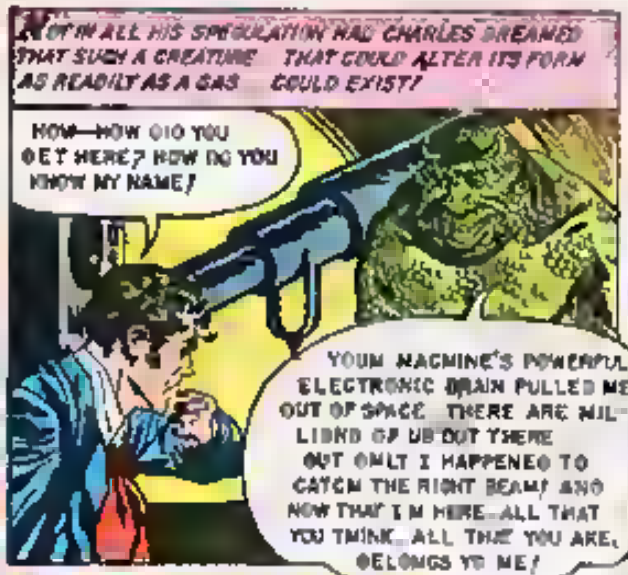

I WONDER WHICH PLANET I WAS REACHING? BY NOW I WOULD HAVE KNOWN SECRETS NO MAN HAS EVER KNOWN BEFORE! IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN MARS—OR PERHAPS MERCURY, WHICH IS ONLY THIRTY-SIX MILLION MILES AWAY AND THE NEAREST PLANET TO EARTH!


TO HAVE MY MACHINE BROKEN TONIGHT WITH SUCCESS WITHIN MY GRASP! WHY, I MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ONE OF THE GREAT MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE!
HEH! HEH! I GOT HERE BEFORE YOUR MACHINE WAS SMASHED, CHARLES! THE BEAM BREW ME RIGHT TO YOU!

AS CHARLES LATHAM PUT HIS EYES TO THE TELESCOPE, HE RECEIVED AN UNSPOKEN MESSAGE AS CLEARLY AS THOUGH A VOICE SPOKE DIRECTLY INTO HIS EAR!
LET ME IN, CHARLES!
NO! NO! IT— IT CAN'T BE!

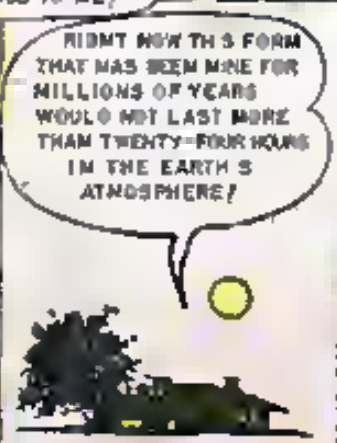
W—WHAT HORRIBLE THING ARE YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHAT DO YOU WANT!

I WANT YOU, CHARLES! WE HAVE BEEN AS INTERESTED IN GETTING THROUGH TO EARTH AS YOU HAVE BEEN IN TRYING TO CONTACT WHAT LIES BEYOND EARTH AND NOW WITH YOUR HELP — I AM HERE!


NOT IN ALL HIS SPECULATION HAD CHARLES DREAMED THAT SUCH A CREATURE... THAT COULD ALTER ITS FORM AS READILY AS A GAS... COULD EXIST!
HOW—HOW DID YOU GET HERE? HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME!
YOUR MACHINE'S POWERFUL ELECTRONIC BRAIN PULLED ME OUT OF SPACE... THERE ARE MILLIONS OF US OUT THERE BUT ONLY I HAPPENED TO CATCH THE RIGHT BEAM! AND NOW THAT I'M HERE—ALL THAT YOU THINK... ALL THAT YOU ARE, BELONGS TO ME!

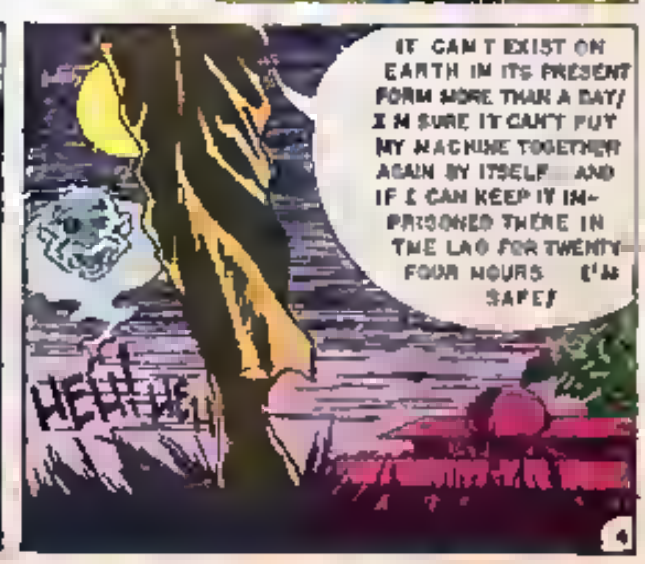
YOU WERE RIGHT IN YOUR BELIEF THAT THOUGHT SURMOUNTS ALL LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND SPACE... RIGHT NOW I AM NOT SPEAKING TO YOU... YOU ARE FEELING MY THOUGHT WAVES... AND FROM YOUR BRAIN I AM DRAWING ALL THAT YOU KNOW!

THE HYPNOTIC GLARE OF THE HORRIBLE EYES SEEMED TO GO THROUGH CHARLES LIKE AN ELECTRIC SHOCK!
STOP! I—I CAN'T STAND IT! THE PAIN... T-YOU ARE PULLING MY BRAIN APART!
NO, CHARLES! THAT WILL COME LATER WHEN I TAKE YOU BACK WITH ME! THEN WE WILL TAKE YOU APART SO THAT WE MAY BUILD OURSELVES SIMILAR BODIES THAT WILL ENDURE ON EARTH!


RIGHT NOW THIS FORM THAT HAS BEEN MINE FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS WOULD NOT LAST MORE THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS IN THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE!

SO WE MUST HURRY AND REASSEMBLE YOUR MACHINE... THEN WHEN WE LEAVE, WE'LL BEAM IT SO THAT WE FROM BEYOND CAN COME BACK AND FORTH AT WILL UNTIL WE MAKE THIS EARTH OUR OWN AND THE PRESENT INHABITANTS OUR SLAVES!
NO! NO!

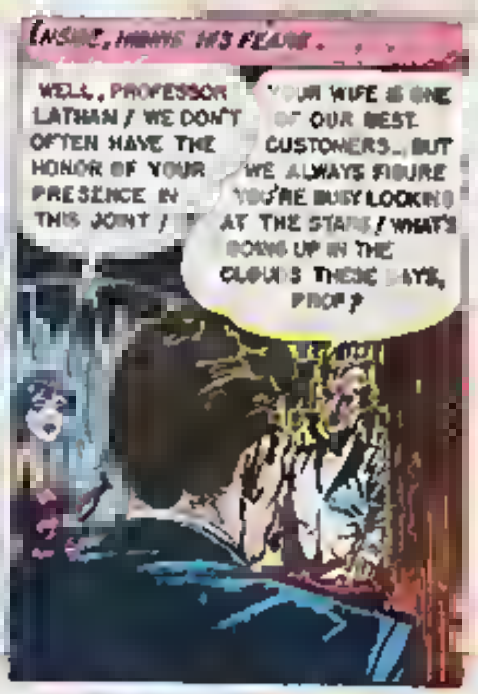
RUSHING FROM HIS OBSERVATORY-LAB, CHARLES SLAMMED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM
WHEN I'M AWAY FROM THOSE EYES MY HEAD FEELS BETTER... I—I CAN THINK AGAIN! DOES THAT CREATURE THINK I'D BE FOOL ENOUGH TO REBUILD A MACHINE THAT WOULD HELP SEAL MY OWN DOOM!


IT CAN'T EXIST ON EARTH IN ITS PRESENT FORM MORE THAN A DAY! I'M SURE IT CAN'T PUT MY MACHINE TOGETHER AGAIN BY ITSELF... AND IF I CAN KEEP IT IMPRISONED THERE IN THE LAB FOR TWENTY-FOUR HOURS... I'M SAFE!
HEH!

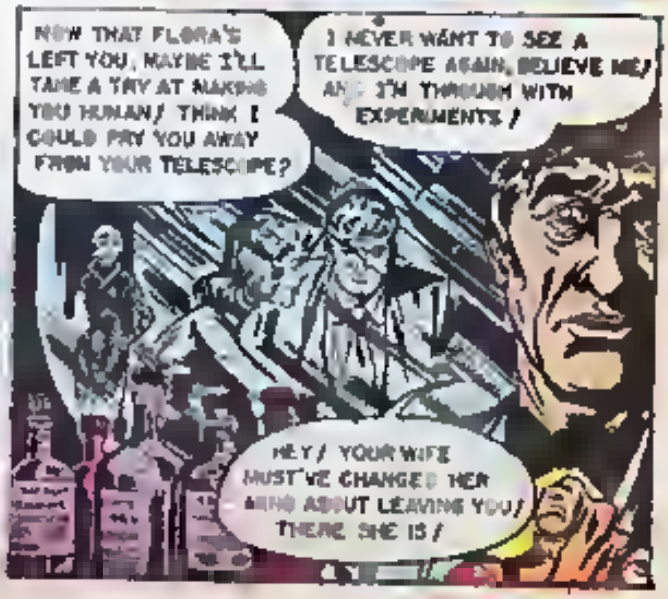
I'LL GO INTO TOWN ...SEE PEOPLE ...GET A DRINK/ THIS WHOLE NIGHT HAS BEEN LIKE A TERRIBLE DREAM/ FIRST FLORA—POOR FLORA—I KILLED HER... AND SHE WAS RIGHT/ I WAS CRAZY TO FOOL AROUND WITH THAT MACHINE/

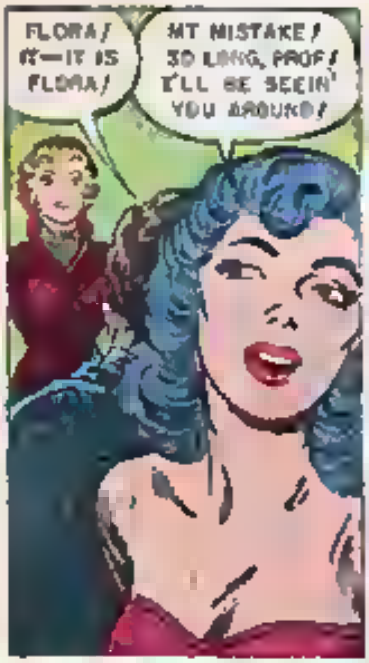
AS SOON AS IT'S SAFE TO GO BACK TO MY LAB, I—I'LL HAVE TO GET RID OF FLORA'S BODY/ I'LL TELL EVERYONE SHE LEFT ME/ I GUESS IT'LL BE SAFE TO WAIT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS/ OH... MY HEAD/

THAT'S FUNNY/ NOW THE PAIN IN MY HEAD HAS GONE/ AND THERE'S THE TAVERN/ I NEVER THOUGHT I'D ACTUALLY WANT TO BE WITH THE PEOPLE THAT HANG OUT THERE...
I'LL SEE YOU IN A FEW MINUTES, CHARLES/

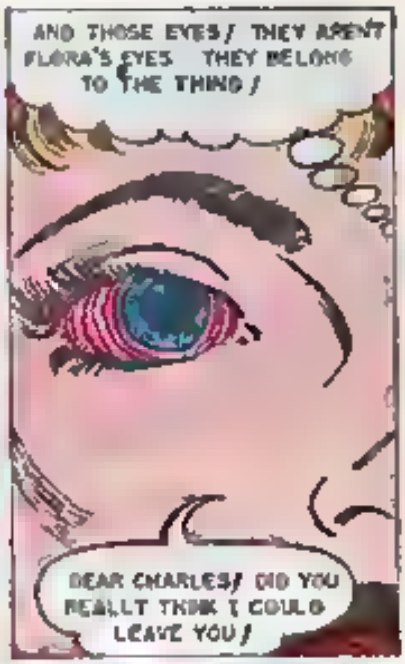

INSIDE, HIDING HIS FEARS...
WELL, PROFESSOR LATHAM/ WE DON'T OFTEN HAVE THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE IN THIS JOINT/
YOUR WIFE IS ONE OF OUR BEST CUSTOMERS... BUT WE ALWAYS FIGURE YOU'RE BUSY LOOKING AT THE STARS/ WHAT'S GOING UP IN THE CLOUDS THESE DAYS, PROF?

AND IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR FLORA... SHE HASN'T BEEN IN YET TONIGHT/
I'M THROUGH WITH STARGAZING ...AND YOU'LL HAVE TO GET USED TO NOT SEEING FLORA, SHE WALKED OUT ON ME TONIGHT ...SAID SHE WAS GOING HOME/ SO NOW ABOUT EVERYBODY HAVING A DRINK WITH ME/

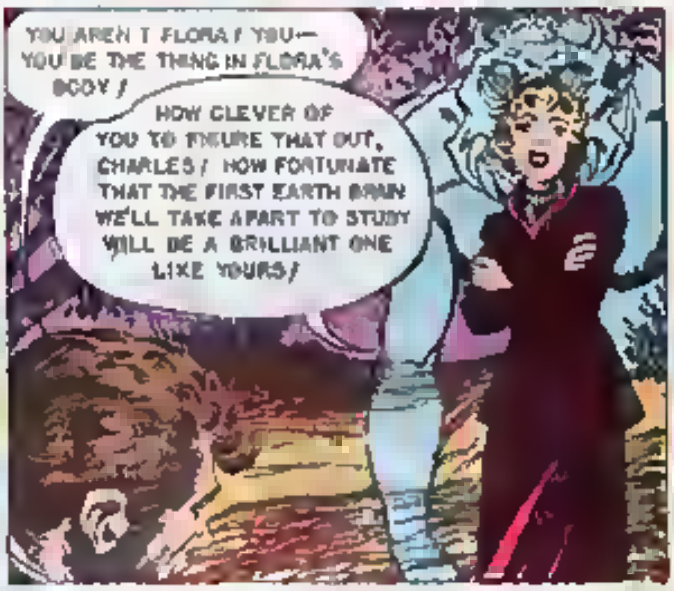

NOW THAT FLORA'S LEFT YOU, MAYBE I'LL TAKE A TRY AT MAKING YOU HUMAN/ THINK I COULD PRY YOU AWAY FROM YOUR TELESCOPE?
I NEVER WANT TO SEE A TELESCOPE AGAIN, BELIEVE ME/ AND I'M THROUGH WITH EXPERIMENTS/
HEY/ YOUR WIFE MUST'VE CHANGED HER MIND ABOUT LEAVING YOU/ THERE SHE IS/


FLORA! IT—IT IS FLORA!
MY MISTAKE! SO LONG, PROF! I'LL BE SEEIN' YOU AROUND!

AS THE FIGURE OF HIS WIFE WALKED TOWARD HIM, CHARLES WAS FILLED WITH A PARALYZING TERROR!
BUT—BUT IT CAN'T BE FLORA! SHE'S DEAD! I COULDN'T BE MISTAKEN! MY HEAD! THAT TERRIBLE FEELING AGAIN—AS THOUGH MY BRAIN WAS BEING DRAGGED OUT OF MY SKULL!


AND THOSE EYES! THEY AREN'T FLORA'S EYES—THEY BELONG TO THE THING!
DEAR CHARLES! DID YOU REALLY THINK I COULD LEAVE YOU!

ALTHOUGH THE HAND ON HIS ARM WAS FLORA'S, IT'S FINGERS HAD THE STRENGTH OF SUPER-NATURAL CLAWS! ALTHOUGH HE TRIED TO HOLD BACK, HE HAD LOST THE POWER OF HIS OWN WILL!
CHARLES, WE MUST GO HOME NOW—YOU HAVE WORK TO DO IN YOUR LABORATORY


YOU AREN'T FLORA! YOU—YOU'RE THE THING IN FLORA'S BODY!
HOW CLEVER OF YOU TO FIGURE THAT OUT, CHARLES! HOW FORTUNATE THAT THE FIRST EARTH BRAIN WE'LL TAKE APART TO STUDY WILL BE A BRILLIANT ONE LIKE YOURS!

THROUGH CHARLES' AGONIZED THOUGHTS FLASHED HORRIBLE PICTURES OF HIS FATE—SHOULD HE REMAIN IN THIS CREATURE'S POWER!
I WON'T LET YOU DO THIS TO ME!

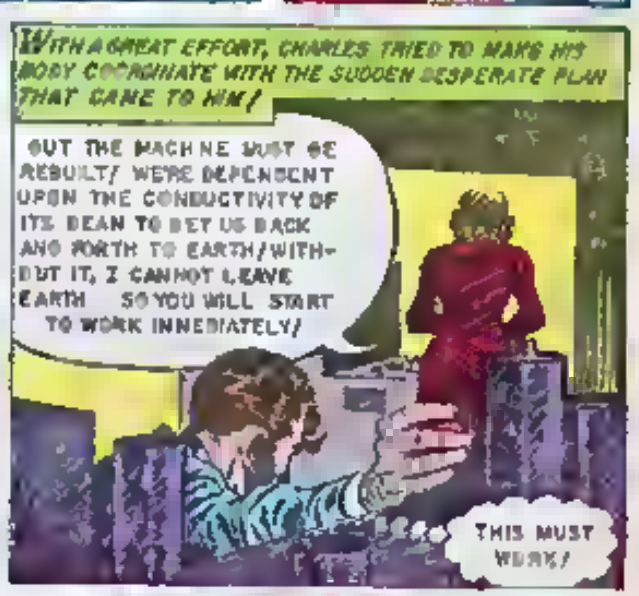
YOU CANNOT HELP YOURSELF, CHARLES—FROM NOW ON YOU WILL DO AS I TELL YOU! YOU ARE COMPLETELY IN MY POWER AND WHEN I LEAVE THIS EARTH, YOU WILL GO WITH ME!
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY OUT OF THIS FOR ME!

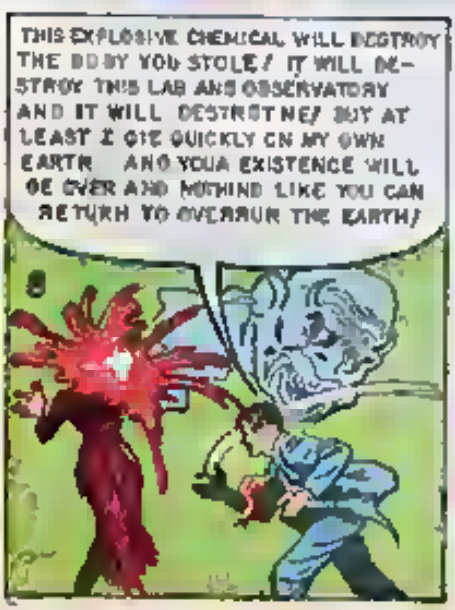
TRY AS HARD AS HE COULD, CHARLES WAS UNABLE TO THROW OFF THE CREATURE'S HYPNOTIC SPELL
YOU'VE BEEN A WONDERFUL ASSISTANCE THE IDEA OF TAKING OVER A FLORA'S BODY TO PROLONG MY TIME ON EARTH CAME FROM YOUR OWN THOUGHTS WHEN YOU WERE PLANNING ON NOW YOU MUST BURY HER AS SOON AS YOU GET RID OF ME!

WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD IMPRISON ME IN YOUR LAB, YOU WERE WRONG NOTHING ON EARTH CAN DOOM ME SINCE I HAVE THE ABILITY TO EXPAND, CONTRACT OR VAPORIZE

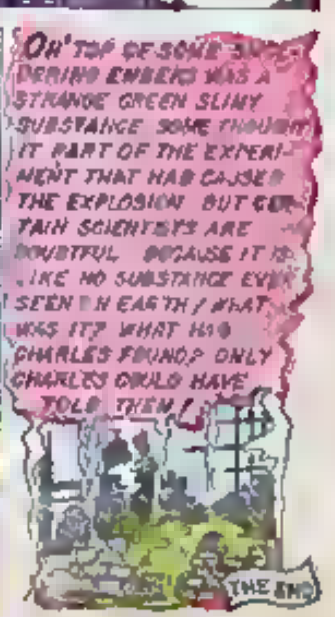
WHEN I FOLLOWED YOU I COULD HAVE DRAGGED YOU BACK HERE THEN, BUT I SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT WITH THE SOUL GONE FROM THIS BODY I COULD ENTER IT AND FUNCTION AS A HUMAN BEING AS LONG AS I NEEDED TO STAY ON EARTH!

SO YOU AIDED MY PLANS BY HAVING A BODY ALL READY FOR ME TO STEP INTO. NOW, IF WE DO NOT REBUILD THE MACHINE IN THE TIME REMAINING TO ME IN NATURAL FORM... I AM SAFELY ENCASED IN THE HUMAN FORM YOU PROVIDED FOR ME!


WITH A GREAT EFFORT, CHARLES TRIED TO MAKE HIS BODY COORDINATE WITH THE SUDDEN DESPERATE PLAN THAT CAME TO HIM!
BUT THE MACHINE MUST BE REBUILT! WE'RE DEPENDENT UPON THE CONDUCTIVITY OF ITS BEAM TO BEAT US BACK AND FORTH TO EARTH! WITHOUT IT, I CANNOT LEAVE EARTH SO YOU WILL START TO WORK IMMEDIATELY!
THIS MUST WORK!

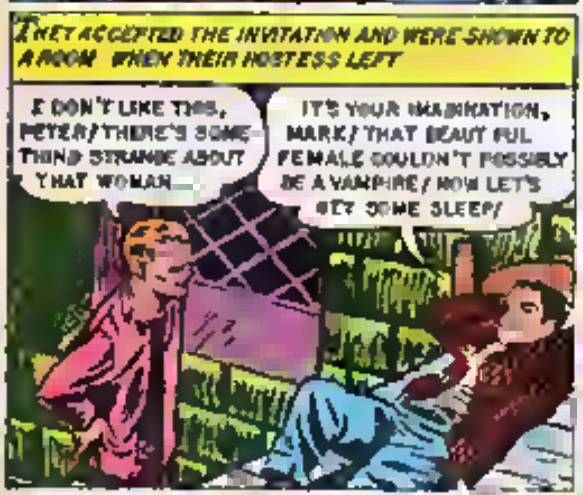

THIS EXPLOSIVE CHEMICAL WILL DESTROY THE BODY YOU STOLE! IT WILL DESTROY THIS LAB AND OBSERVATORY AND IT WILL DESTROY ME! BUT AT LEAST I DIE QUICKLY ON MY OWN EARTH AND YOUR EXISTENCE WILL BE OVER AND NOTHING LIKE YOU CAN RETURN TO OVERRUN THE EARTH!

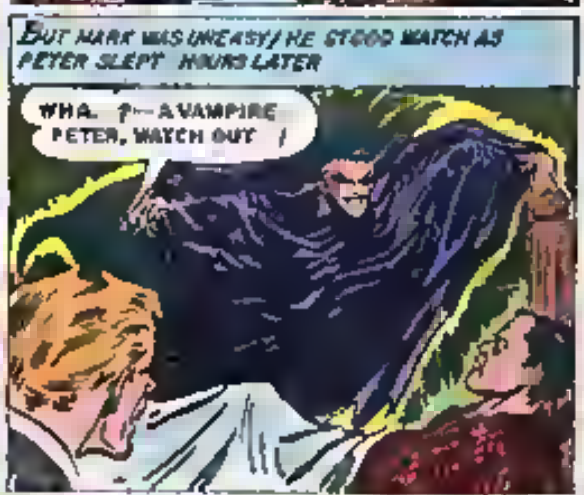
I HAVE FAILED! BUT THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE ME AND OUR DANCE WILL COME AGAIN THROUGH ANOTHER FOOL LIKE THIS ONE!


ON TOP OF SOME SUPER-HEATED EMBERS WAS A STRANGE GREEN SLIMY SUBSTANCE. SOME THOUGHT IT PART OF THE EXPERIMENT THAT HAD CAUSED THE EXPLOSION BUT CERTAIN SCIENTISTS ARE DOUBTFUL BECAUSE IT IS LIKE NO SUBSTANCE EVER SEEN ON EARTH! WHAT WAS IT? WHAT HAD CHARLES FOUND? ONLY CHARLES COULD HAVE TOLD THEM!
THE END

TRUE TALES of UNEXPLAINED MYSTERY

THE VAMPIRE OF BELDEN CASTLE, IN THE BLACK MOUNTAINS OF HUNGARY, IS AN OFT DISCUSSED ITEM AMONG THE STUDENTS OF THE SUPERNATURAL. PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THIS VAMPIRE EXISTS TODAY. THE ACQUIRING OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS A STARTLING ADVENTURE INTO THE REALM OF THE UNBELIEVABLE. IN THE SUMMER OF 1931, TWO STUDENTS WENT SEEKING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE VAMPIRE OF THE CASTLE.

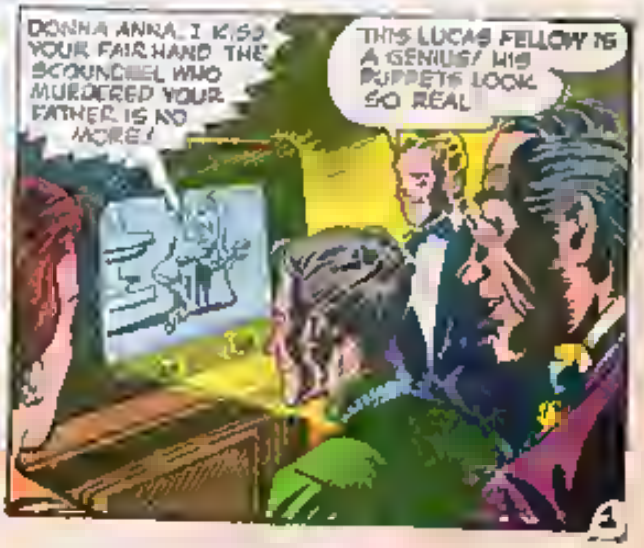




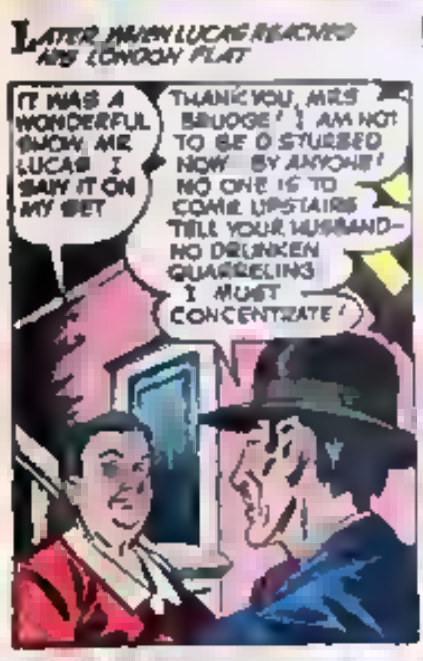
THE AWESOME BEAST SANK ITS FANGS INTO PETER'S NECK! MARK FLED IN TERROR... BUT NOT BEFORE HE SNAPPED A PICTURE OF THE SCENE! BACK IN CIVILIZATION, MARK DEVELOPED THE FILM AND SHOWED THE PROOF OF HIS TERRIBLE ORDEAL. A RESCUE CREW MADE THEIR WAY TO THE CASTLE TO SEE THE EVIL DESCRIBED IN THE PHOTOGRAPH. COBWEBS AND DUST IN THE ROOM WHERE THE TWO MEN SPENT THE NIGHT MADE IT CLEAR THAT NOTHING HAD BEEN DISTURBED! THEY SAW THE PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE VAMPIRE OF BELDEN CASTLE, AND YET, NO TRACE OF PETER OR THE WOMAN DESCRIBED BY MARK, WAS EVER FOUND. ANOTHER EERIE TALE RECORDED IN THE ANNALS OF THE SUPERNATURAL. THE END

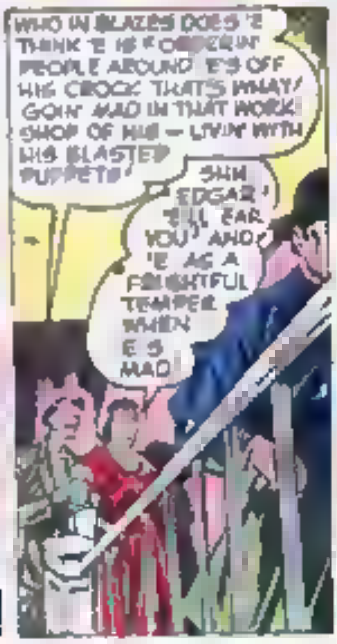
THE PHANTOM PUPPET

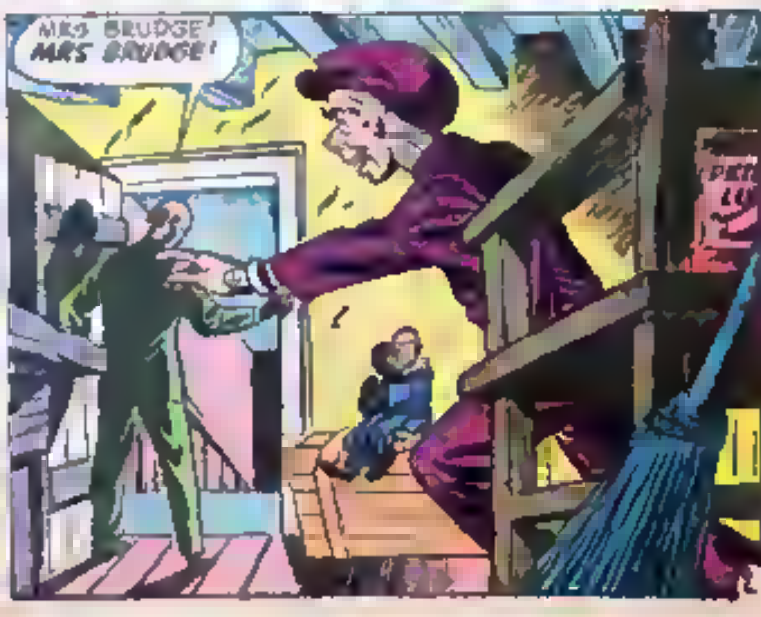
PETER LUCAS, THE FAMOUS PUPPET-MASTER, COULD MAKE HIS PUPPETS DO EVERYTHING BUT BREATHE. IN FACT HIS PUPPETRY HAD REACHED SUCH A PINNACLE OF ART THAT ONLY LIFE ITSELF REMAINED UNATTAINABLE. OR WAS IT? LUCAS GOT THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IN BLOOD-CURDLING ACCENTS! NOW WAS THERE ANY RETREAT FROM THE HORROR HIS VANITY HAD LOOSED ON LONDON AND ON HIMSELF!

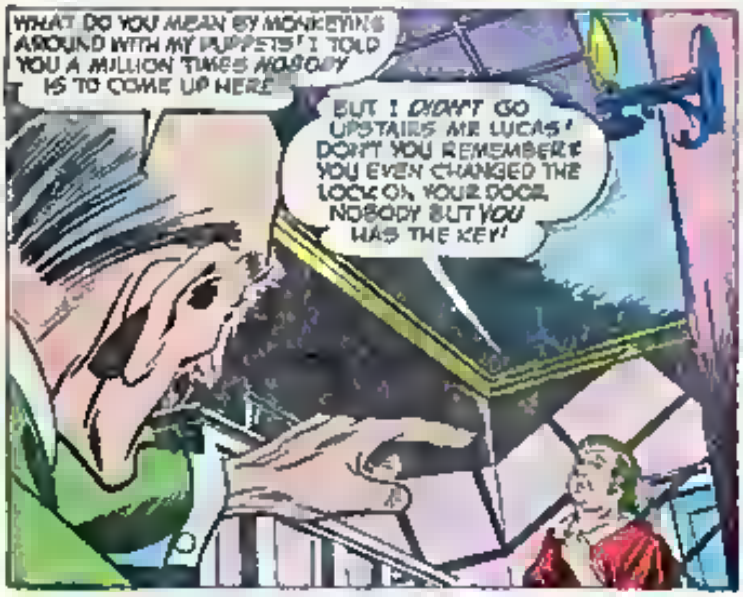


LATER WHEN LUCAS REACHED HIS LONDON FLAT








WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY MONKEYING AROUND WITH MY PUPPETS! I TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES NOBODY IS TO COME UP HERE!
BUT I DIDN'T GO UPSTAIRS MR LUCAS! DON'T YOU REMEMBER? YOU EVEN CHANGED THE LOCK ON YOUR DOOR. NOBODY BUT YOU HAS THE KEY!

"THAT'S TRUE" AND YET SOMEBODY MUST HAVE MOVED THE PUPPET!

(GASP!) GOOD HEAVENS! NOW HE'S ON THE WORKTABLE AGAIN! D-DID I JUST IMAGINE HE WAS ON THE CHAIR? W-WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

IT MUST BE OVERWORK— NERVOUSNESS! I—I SEE THINGS THAT AREN'T THERE. I WANT THIS PUPPET TO BE MY MASTERPIECE. TO BE ALMOST HUMAN... A DIMINUTIVE MORTAL!

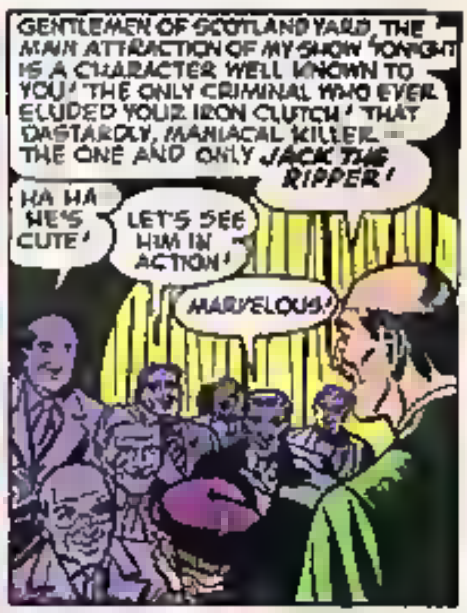
IN THIS PUPPET I WANT TO REINCARNATE THE SOUL OF ENGLAND'S MOST INFAMOUS MURDERER... JACK THE RIPPER! HE MUST BE SO PERFECTLY CONSTRUCTED THAT HE'LL ALMOST HAVE A SOUL OF HIS OWN! HE MUST SHOCK THOSE SCOTLAND YARD BOYS AT THE BENEFIT!

YEOWWW! MY LEG!

THE PUPPET—HE STABBED ME WITH THE SCISSORS! BUT HOW COULD HE? UNLESS—YES, IT'S THE ONLY WAY! I MUST'VE TOUCHED SOME WIRES AND BROUGHT ABOUT A MECHANICAL REFLEX!

I COULD SWEAR THERE'S A GLEAM OF SATISFACTION IN HIS GLASS EYES. A MALEVOLENCE IN HIS EXPRESSION... AS IF HE ENJOYED STABBING ME! YES! THIS JACK THE RIPPER PUPPET WILL BE MY MASTERPIECE! HE WILL BE AS CLOSE TO HUMAN AS WOOD PAINT AND WIRE CAN GET!

Tonight
BENEFIT
for
Retired Patrolmen of Scotland Yard
featuring
the GREAT LUCAS
AND HIS PUPPETS


GENTLEMEN OF SCOTLAND YARD, THE MAIN ATTRACTION OF MY SHOW TONIGHT IS A CHARACTER WELL KNOWN TO YOU! THE ONLY CRIMINAL WHO EVER ELUDED YOUR IRON CLUTCH! THAT DASTARDLY, MANIACAL KILLER — THE ONE AND ONLY JACK THE RIPPER!
HA HA HE'S CUTE!
LET'S SEE HIM IN ACTION!
MARVELOUS!

YOU ASKED FOR ACTION AND YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT! I WILL SHOW YOU TONIGHT HOW JACK THE RIPPER ACCOMPLISHED SOME OF HIS MOST HEINOUS MURDERS! AND NOW JACK THE RIPPER SPEAKS FOR HIMSELF!

AH! A PRETTY, UNESCORTED MAIDEN, WITH A SLENDER WHITE THROAT! PREPARE TO DIE MY PRETTY! FOR YOU HAVE COME FACE TO FACE WITH JACK THE RIPPER!

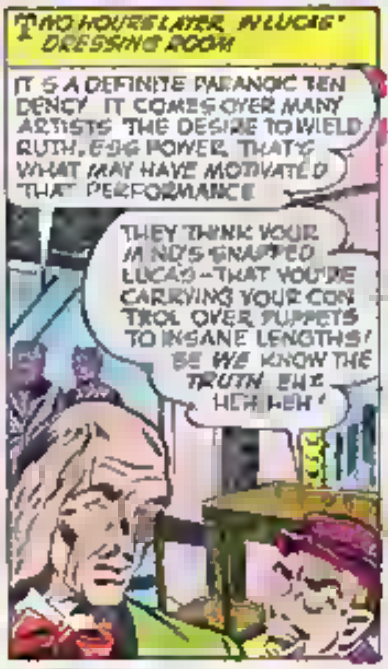
ALL MUST PERISH! YOUNG AND OLD!
THE STRONG MAN CANNOT PROTECT HIMSELF!
NOR CAN THE SPECTACLE OF BEAUTY STAY MY HAND... THE HAND OF A MASTER CRIMINAL WHO LOVES ONLY DEATH!

ENOUGH! THIS IS IN BAD TASTE! THE MAN MOCKS US!
LUCAS MUST BE MENTALLY SICK TO PUT ON A PERFORMANCE LIKE THIS!

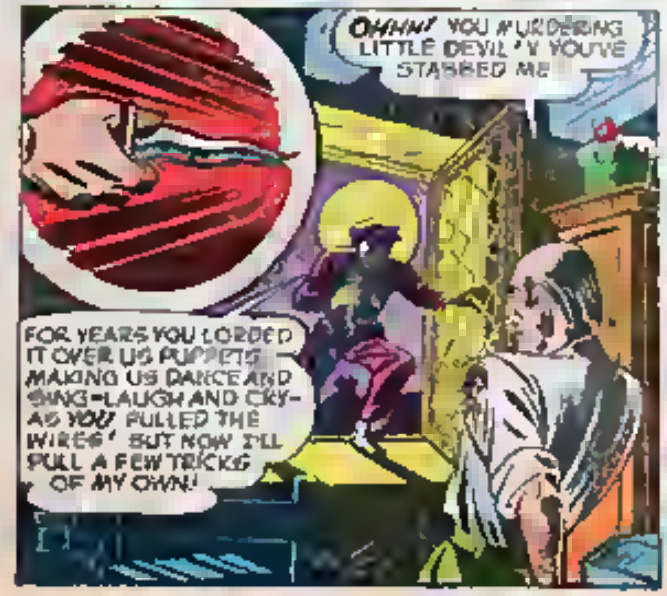
THE PUPPET IS MOVING WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF MY WIRE PULLING! THOSE ARE HIS WORDS NOT MINE! HE'S GONE BERSERK—ON HIS OWN!
NOBODY CAN CATCH ME! I'M TOO CLEVER!
TAKE HIM OFF!

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND I'M ALIVE! EH, PUPPET MAKER? BUT WE SHALL KEEP THE PRETENSE GOING! WE SHALL PRETEND ONCE MORE THAT YOU CONTROL ME!
(GASP!) H-HE'S TALKING TO ME! HE—HE'S ALIVE!
STOP THE SHOW!

MOMENTS LATER
I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR ANY OFFENSE I MAY HAVE GIVEN. AFTER A BRIEF INTERMISSION WE'LL CONTINUE WITH THE ROMANCE OF ROMEO AND JULIET.
THAT'S MUCH BETTER! FOR A MOMENT, LUCAS WE THOUGHT YOU HAD LOST YOUR MIND!


TWO HOURS LATER, IN LUCAS' DRESSING ROOM
IT'S A DEFINITE PARANOIC TENDENCY. IT COMES OVER MANY ARTISTS. THE DESIRE TO WIELD RUTHLESS POWER. THAT'S WHAT MAY HAVE MOTIVATED THAT PERFORMANCE.
THEY THINK YOUR MIND'S SNAPPED LUCAS—THAT YOU'RE CARRYING YOUR CONTROL OVER PUPPETS TO INSANE LENGTHS! BUT WE KNOW THE TRUTH, EH? HEH-HEH!

AN HOUR LATER, IN LUCAS' WORKSHOP...
NOW I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU APART, PIECE BY PIECE, AND SEE WHERE I MADE MY MISTAKE! I KNOW I'M NOT CRAZY AND YET YOU SEEM TO HAVE A LIFE OF YOUR OWN!
FOOL! YOU PUT THE SOUL OF JACK THE RIPPER INTO MY WOODEN HEART AND I SHALL NOT REST UNTIL I HAVE KILLED IN REALITY!


OHHH! YOU MURDERING LITTLE DEVIL! YOU'VE STABBED ME!
FOR YEARS YOU LORDED IT OVER US PUPPETS, MAKING US DANCE AND SING—LAUGH AND CRY—AS YOU PULLED THE WIRES! BUT NOW I'LL PULL A FEW TRICKS OF MY OWN!

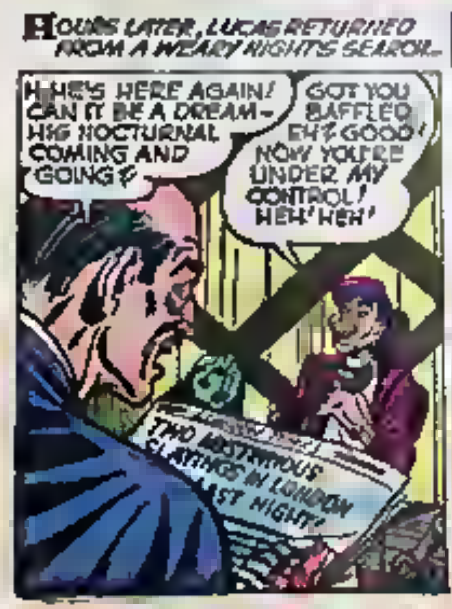
COME BACK YOU LITTLE MONSTER!
FROM TONIGHT FORWARD, AT THE SCENE OF EVERY JACK THE RIPPER MURDER, ANOTHER CORPSE WILL BE FOUND. VICTIMS OF THE PUPPET YOU BROUGHT TO LIFE!

LUCAS RAN FROM HIS ROOM AND
MR. LUCAS! WE EARD YOU SCREAMIN' AND RUNN'N AROUND UPSTAIRS! IS SOMETHING WR - OWW!
OUT OF MY WAY YOU IDIOT! MY PUPPET ESCAPED! HE'S GOING TO REPEAT ALL THE JACK THE RIPPER MURDERS! I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!

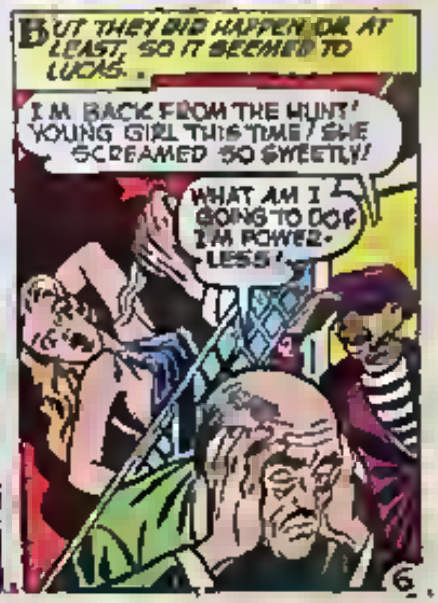
'IS PUPPET ESCAPED?
I TOLD YOU 'E WAS OFF 'IS CROCK!
JACK! COME BACK! DON'T KILL ANYBODY! T' THEY'LL ONLY BLAME ME! JACK!

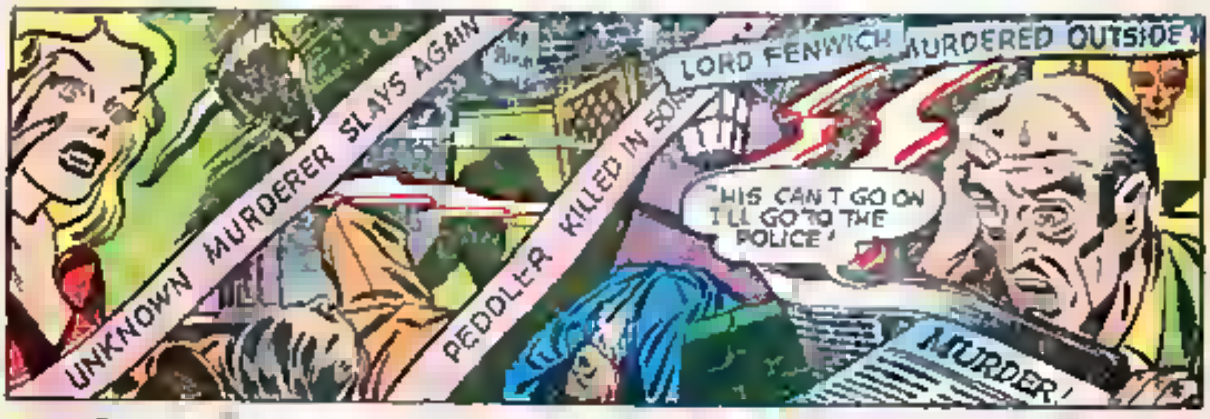
LATER THAT NIGHT...
ALL WE HEARD WAS A SCREAM. THEN WE FOUND HIM LIKE THIS - HIS THROAT CUT!
I-- I'M TOO LATE!
GIVES ME THE SHIVERS, IT DOES! IT'S LIKE THE FIRST MURDER JACK THE RIPPER COMMITTED! RIGHT ERE, IN THE SAME DOORWAY!

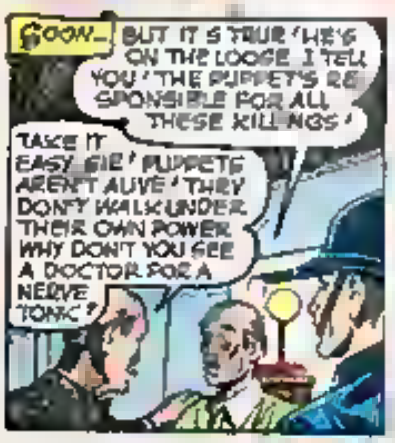
AYE, LUCAS! NOTHING CAN STOP ME NOW! WHO'D BELIEVE THAT A PUPPET - A MERE HUNK OF WOOD AND WIRE - COULD KILL? HEH! HEH! READ THE PAPERS! FOLLOW MY BLOODY CAREER - FOR THEIR BLOOD IS ON YOUR HANDS!
N-NO! NO!

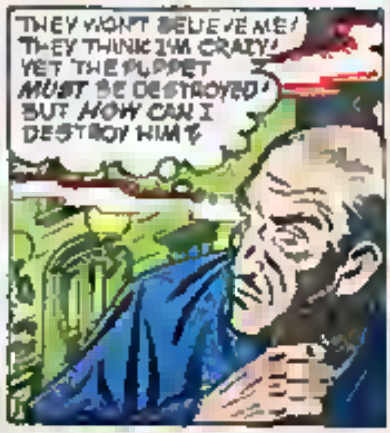

HOURS LATER, LUCAS RETURNED FROM A WEARY NIGHT'S SEARCH...
H-HE'S HERE AGAIN! CAN IT BE A DREAM - HIS NOCTURNAL COMING AND GOING?
GOT YOU BAFFLED, EH? GOOD! NOW YOU'RE UNDER MY CONTROL! HEH! HEH!
TWO MOSTEROUS ATTACKS IN LONDON LAST NIGHT!

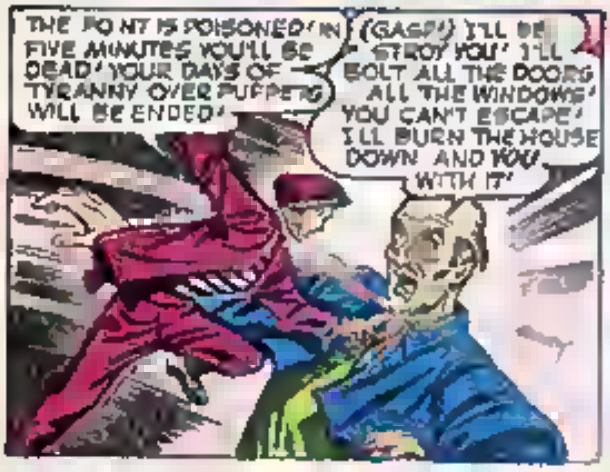
I'M NOT LIKE YOU - REQUIRING SLEEP AND REST! I CAN ALWAYS WATCH YOU, BUT YOU CAN'T WATCH ME! FALL ASLEEP LUCAS AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS! HEH! HEH!
I MUST BE GOING MAD! THINGS LIKE THIS CAN'T HAPPEN!

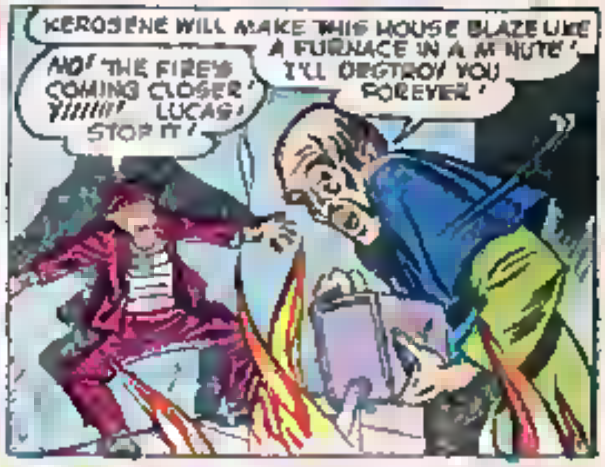

BUT THEY DID HAPPEN! OR AT LEAST, SO IT SEEMED TO LUCAS...
I'M BACK FROM THE HUNT! YOUNG GIRL THIS TIME! SHE SCREAMED SO SWEETLY!
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I'M POWERLESS!











YES, WHO KNOWS? WAS ALL THIS HORROR MERELY IN THE TWISTED BRAIN OF THE PUPPET-MASTER? IT ALL SEEMED SO REAL TO PETER LUCAS. BUT PERHAPS HE WAS JUST A RAVING LUNATIC PROJECTING HIS OWN SPLIT PERSONALITY TO HIS PUPPET CREATION AND IMAGINING IT LIVED! PERHAPS LUCAS HIMSELF WAS THE FIENDISH MURDERER, ROAMING THE LONDON STREETS IN SEARCH OF VICTIMS? ALAS WHO CAN UNRAVEL THE DARK MYSTERIES OF THIS STRANGE WORLD?

Jke

END

THE DEVIL'S OFFER

It is just two months since I dropped into that little bar in the East Fifties in New York. There wasn't anything strange or peculiar about the place. It was just an ordinary bar, like so many others in the city, but as it happened, that was where I met the fellow.

I'd ordered a beer and was sitting, lonely and unhappy, reviewing all the circumstances that had brought me to the city, when the man sitting alongside me spoke.

"New in New York?" he asked.

For a moment I hesitated in answering. I'd been irritatedly aware of his penetrating gaze upon me while I'd been sitting there, as though he had some peculiar reason of his own.

But finally I nodded.

"How do you like the big city?" he probed.

"Not too much," I said. I suspected he was probably one of those individuals who go around being continually enthusiastic about the wonders of the great metropolis, and feeling a need to confound him, I pursued the topic further.

"As a matter of fact," I said, "it's not at all what I'd expected. It's a huge, lethargic monster upon whose back live thousands of drones, clinging an existence and nothing more from its sluggish bloodstream. It is a gargantuan hive, with too many movie houses, too many restaurants, and too many buildings—all leveling off to a mediocrity that can be found in any other good sized town."

The fellow sat there a moment thoughtfully, not apparently disturbed by my reply. Finally he said, "Where have you been? What have you seen?"

"The usual things," I shrugged. "Rockefeller Center, the Battery, the Bowery."

"Oh," he exclaimed. "Don't base your judgment by those things." He leaned forward and tapped the sleeve of my jacket confidentially. "Those are the usual things to see—what every tourist comes here for." He lowered his voice and looked at me with eyes that seemed to unravel my most hidden thoughts. "There are other things to see—things that are off the beaten track—chances for a man to express his hidden, latent—" his brow darkened—"his submerged yearnings."

I struggled for a moment against the surge of feeling that swept through me. How could this fellow suspect the thing that had driven me from my home town and the girl I loved, forced me to flee and lose myself in this big city lest I give way to the madness that seized me at times when I wanted to lose myself in destruction, to indulge in dark revelries that were still only phantasies and half formed fears in my mind?

Then, almost simultaneously, with a growing excitement, the idea came to me that perhaps here was my opportunity, a chance to experience and save the strange longings in me—here where there was no fear of discovery and I was far from the microscopic gaze of my small home town.

"What is this place," I asked. My throat suddenly felt dry and tight.

The fellow threw some change on the bar to pay for our drinks and stood up. "Come with me, and I'll show you," he said.

I followed him outside, and silently we walked through the deserted streets of New York while the excitement grew in me. The way was twisting and turning, through one dark avenue into another, while steadily the neighborhood deteriorated and garbage cans and refuse littered the pavement in unkempt profusion.

We paused finally before a red painted door wedged in between two huge dark, silent factory buildings. It was not locked, and the fellow pushed it open. We went up the dark carpeted stairs and came finally to a room. We entered, and I found myself suddenly bathed in a brilliant white light in which every detail of the scene was finely etched.

Apparently all had been motionless before, but at the entrance of my friend bedlam filled the room. There were glad cries of, "You have come! You have come!" And the individuals within the room began capering madly about.

My horrified eyes absorbed the scene: the heavy chains and shackles that each man wore upon his wrists and ankles, chaining him to the other.

"What madness is this?" I protested. "You told me that here one could do as he pleased. Why are those people chained?"

My companion smiled in a peculiar fashion. "Don't be upset by what you see," he reminded me. "I told you that here one could do as he pleased. Each man forms his own destiny. It

pleases these to wear chains. They are happy this way. You have only to see how they laugh and caper to realize they enjoy their bondage. You, too, can seize the pleasure you wish most."

While I stood pondering this, my friend donned a robe. It was black, so dark that it seemed to me to have the depth and hue of death, and the lining was red with the brightness of pain and torment.

"Now what is your pleasure?" he demanded.

The voice I heard then was mine, but it did not seem to come out of me.

"To kill," I whispered. "To drive a car madly and careeningly down a crowded thoroughfare—to kill every living thing that comes across my path."

There was no interval between my wish and what happened next. Suddenly I was back in my home town, and I was behind the wheel of a car. Even while I tried to stop, I pressed the accelerator down to the floor, and laughter bubbled in my throat as first a dog, and then a woman, and finally an old man were crushed by the onslaught of my car.

And then as quickly as I had entered it, my phantasy was over, and I found myself facing my friend in that room again, the ecstasy still coursing through me.

And suddenly my next desire came to mind. What would it be like, I wondered longingly, to wrap my hands around Hortense's throat, to extinguish the life from that exquisite creature I loved so well?

And even before I had expressed it, I found myself at Hortense's home. The house was dark, and just the moonlight of the soft summer night illuminated the porch and the swing in which we sat. I leaned toward her, and she smiled at me.

"I love you," I whispered tenderly. And then my fingers caressed her throat—and tightened, and I pressed ever deeper as she struggled in my grasp. When she was quite still, my hands fell away. I looked once upon my handiwork—and again confronted my friend.

I had drunk deeply of these fires that burned so brightly within me, but I found myself unsatisfied, restless, as though there were still one experience that had escaped me.

As though he felt my thoughts, my friend said softly, "There is yet one thing to try—death itself. I can give you the knowledge of what that will be like."

I nodded agreement, and with a wave of his hand, my companion transported us to another sphere! And here I stood horrified, while screams of agony burst from my lips. All the fires of hell were concentrated on consuming my bones, and even while they licked and seared and tore at me, my flesh endured to stand another attack. The agony was beyond bearing, and I screamed and pleaded and writhed in torment.

And then with a shock I perceived my friend. He stood to one side, and he was laughing mercilessly, watching my frenzy with pleasure. Now the black cloak had whipped back, revealing the red lining that glowed as if with life. His face had changed and hardened and his eyes ever more piercing and black, and I knew I faced—the devil!

I don't know how long I endured this torment before I fainted, and when I came to, I was back in my hotel room, lying face down upon my bed. The pillow and sheets were sodden. I was fully clothed, as though I'd flung myself upon my bed in some drunken stupor.

I bathed and shaved and tried somehow to get over the feeling of exhaustion and remembered horror that my dreams had given me. Finally I decided to go out and get something to eat.

Downstairs in the lobby, I picked up a copy of my home town paper. Over pie and coffee, I spread it open to see local news. And there, in black headlines, was the announcement of the tragedy! A car careening madly down Main Street had struck down a dog, a woman, and an old man before its flight could be stopped. It had been driverless, with no license plates, and the police were at a loss to find its owner.

My appetite gone, I fled back to my hotel and pondered what I'd read. Was it possible? Was my dream, in some weird way connected with this tragedy? Or—had it really happened?

For days I walked around, a man in a dream, this ugly thing preying on my mind. And then as a month passed, gradually the harsh outlines of the incident faded in my mind.

And then again it happened! When I picked up my home town paper that evening, the funereal headlines bordered it again. And this time there was talk of a mad killer, for Sunday morning had found Hortense murdered on her quiet suburban porch—brutally murdered, the prints of the killer's fingers embedded purple on her throat!

There was but one thought in my mind after I read that report. I had to find my erstwhile companion of that evening. I retraced my steps to that East Side bar. I entered and examined the place, but the fellow was not there.

"Have you seen anyone like I've described?" I demanded of the bartender. But he shook his head.

I went back slowly to my room, and I am writing this now, lest I go mad. Maybe it is just coincidence—maybe it was just a dream that shaped itself into reality a thousand miles away. But more than my horror of those senseless deaths is the fear for myself and the remembered words of my companion: "*Each man forms his own destiny.*"

Was it just a dream? My hands are clean, I swear it. Yet—do the burning pits of Hell await me, so that I will be flung unexpectedly and screaming, at some appointed hour into their eternal fires?

THE END

A STRANGE, GRUESOME OBSESSION OFTEN MANIFESTS ITSELF IN ALL AGES AND IN ALL COUNTRIES TO OBTAIN POSSESSION OF SOME RELIC OF A PERSON WHO HAS OBTAINED NOTORIETY—EVEN FOR CRIMES! IN THE 17th AND 18th CENTURIES IN ENGLAND THERE WAS A REVOLTING FAD FOR COLLECTING THE HANDS OF EXECUTED CRIMINALS. IN THE TIME OF CHARLES II AS MUCH AS TEN GUINEAS WAS PAID FOR ONE OF THESE DISGUSTING RELICS AND THE EXECUTIONER AT NEWGATE DERIVED CONSIDERABLE REVENUE FROM THE HORRIBLE TRADE

I'LL GO AS HIGH AS TWENTY-FIVE GUINEAS FOR BOTH HANDS!

HE WUZ A BAD 'UN THAT STOKES MURRY! STRANGLIN' WHOEVER HE LAID THEM STRONG HANDS ON! GEENS AS IF HANDS LIKE THEM SHOULD BRING MORE'N OTHERS!

CRIMSON HANDS AGAINST HIM

AT LAST DR PAXTON LAYNE STRUCK A BARGAIN THAT SATISFIED THE EXECUTIONER. STOKES MURRY'S HANDS WERE HIS!

HERE YOU BE, SIR! YOU'RE A LUCKY ONE! FEW BLOKES CAN GET HANDS LIKE STOKES MURRY'S!

I'M SURE OF THAT!

AS SOON AS DR LAYNE REACHED HIS OFFICE, HE PUT THE HANDS THROUGH A PRESERVING PROCESS

THE EXECUTIONER WAS RIGHT! WHAT A PRIZE! THE TWO HANDS OF A MAN LIKE STOKES MURRY, THE MOST BRUTAL KILLER OF HIS TIME!

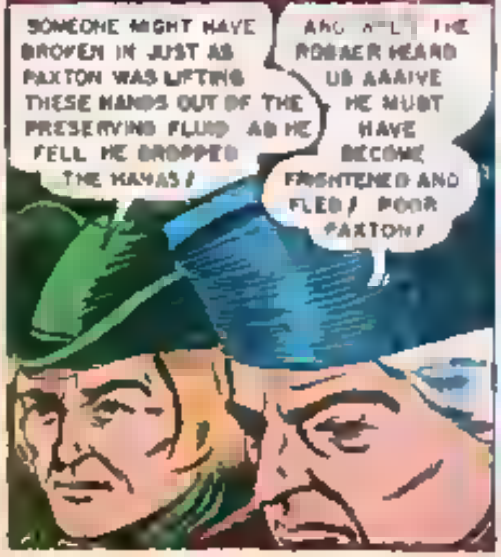
THAT NIGHT.
I HAVE INVITED DR. DENNIS AND LORD ORSLEY OVER TO SEE MY PRIZE. THE HANDS WILL BE READY TO TAKE OUT OF THE SOLUTION BEFORE MY GUESTS ARRIVE

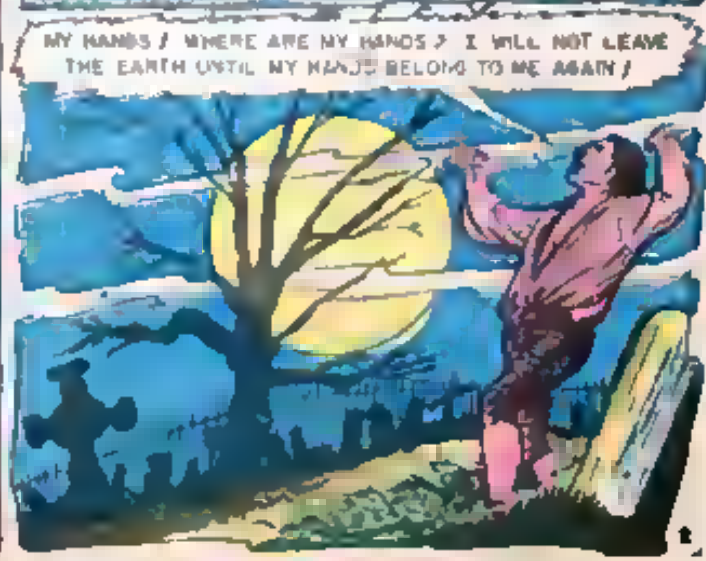
THAT IS STRANGE! THERE ARE NO DOORS OPEN, BUT I FEEL A DRAFT AND A SORT OF UN-EARTHLY COLD THAT THE FIRE DOES NOT WARM!

THE NEXT MOMENT
AAGGHHHH

DR. DENNIS AND LORD ORSLEY ARRIVED A FEW MINUTES LATER
LOOK! IT'S PAXTON ON THE FLOOR! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HIM!

THESE MUST BE THE HANDS THAT HE INVITED US OVER TO SEE! BUT WHY SHOULD THEY BE HERE ON THE FLOOR?
PAXTON HAS BEEN STRANGLED! IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOMEONE OF TREMENDOUS STRENGTH!


SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE BROKEN IN JUST AS PAXTON WAS LIFTING THESE HANDS OUT OF THE PRESERVING FLUID. AS HE FELL HE DROPPED THE HANDS!
AND WHEN THE ROBBER HEARD US ARRIVE HE MUST HAVE BECOME FRIGHTENED AND FLED! POOR PAXTON!


MANY MILES AWAY, FROM THE UNMARKED GRAVE OF AN EXECUTED CRIMINAL, A SINISTER FIGURE STRUGGLES TO THE SURFACE
MY HANDS! WHERE ARE MY HANDS? I WILL NOT LEAVE THE EARTH UNTIL MY HANDS BELONG TO ME AGAIN!

WHILE BACK IN DR. PAXTON LAYNE'S HOME

WHAT DO YOU THINK WE OUGHT TO DO ABOUT THESE HANDS PAXTON BOUGHT? WE CAN'T LEAVE THEM LYING AROUND

WE'D BETTER PUT THEM IN A BOX AND LOCK THEM IN A CHEST WITH PAXTON'S OTHER BELONGINGS UNTIL HIS RELATIVES DECIDE WHAT THEY WANT TO DO WITH THE THINGS

THE BOX CONTAINING THE HANDS WAS PLACED IN THE CHEST WHEN DR. LAYNE'S SISTER-IN-LAW ARRIVED

I CAN'T BOTHER LOOKING THROUGH THAT CHEST NOW! JUST CARRY IT UP TO THE ATTIC!

THE YEARS PASSED AND THE CHEST WAS FORGOTTEN, REMAINING IN THE ATTIC WHERE IT HAD BEEN PLACED

MY HANDS! I WANT MY HANDS! I CANNOT GO BACK TO THE GRAVE WITHOUT THEM!

MANY, MANY YEARS PASSED. THE 20th CENTURY WAS USHERED IN. THE LONDON BLITZ IN WORLD WAR II DESTROYED THE OLD LAYNE HOUSE

A YOUNG U.S. MEDICAL OFFICER, MACK DOYLE, GOES THROUGH THE WRECKAGE LOOKING FOR BONES

FUNNY LOOKING BOX! MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING VALUABLE IN IT! BETTER TAKE IT ALONG!

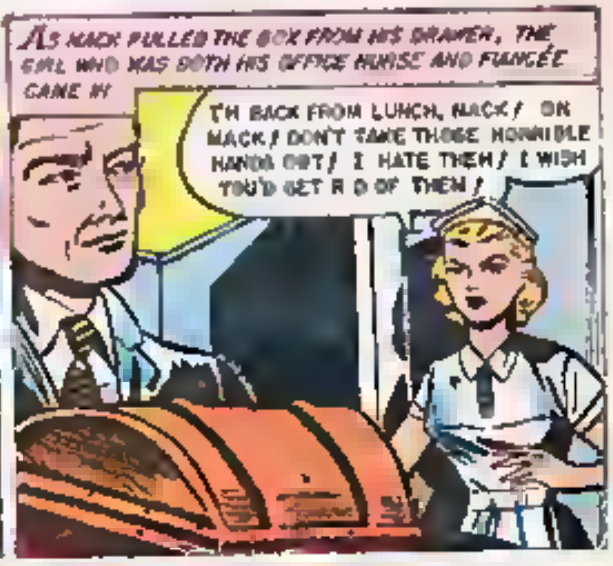
THAT NIGHT MACK OPENED THE BOX...

A PAIR OF HUMAN HANDS! CAN YOU BEAT THAT! AND THE MOST POWERFUL-LOOKING WRISTS I'VE EVER SEEN! I'D SURE LIKE TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO THIS MYSTERY, BUT I PROBABLY NEVER WILL!

BUT JUST FOR THE HECK OF IT, I THINK I'LL KEEP 'EM AS A SOUVENIR AND TAKE THEM BACK TO AMERICA WITH ME WHEN I GO!

WHEN HIS SERVICE WAS OVER MACK DOYLE RETURNED TO HIS OWN COUNTRY AND HAD HIS OWN MEDICAL PRACTICE HE KEPT THE HANDS IN THEIR BOX AS A CURIO TO SHOW HIS FRIENDS BUT ONE DAY
HEY! WHO ARE YOU? AREN'T YOU IN THE WRONG PLACE BUDDY?
I WANT... MY HANDS!
WHAT KIND OF THING ARE YOU? GET OUT! UGHHH YOU'RE LIKE SOMETHING WE USED TO DISSECT IN MEDICAL SCHOOL ONLY WORSE!
MY HANDS! GIVE ME... MY HANDS!
I'LL GIVE YOU SOMETHING ALL RIGHT, YOU ZOMBIE! TAKE THIS!
YIEEE! NO MAN WOULD DARE HIT STOKES MURRY WHEN HE HAD HIS HANDS! I WOULD CHOKE THE LIFE FROM YOUR BODY!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT OF NIGHTMARE THIS IS OR WHERE A CREEP LIKE YOU CAME FROM... BUT YOU AREN'T GOING TO SCARE ME!
AYAHHHH!
THE SOONER I GET RID OF WHAT-EVER YOU ARE. THE BETTER!
MY HANDS — MY HANDS — GIVE THEM TO ME! THEN I'LL GO!
YOU'LL GO ALL RIGHT! AND DON'T COME BACK! DOWN THIS CHUTE INTO THE INCINERATOR! WHATEVER YOU ARE WHEREVER YOU CAME FROM I'D RATHER NOT FIGURE OUT!
INCINERATOR
THAT SHOULD DO THE TRICK!
EEEAHHHH! FOOL! YOU CANNOT KILL THE DEAD! I WILL RETURN FOR MY HANDS!

IF IT HADN'T HAPPENED TO ME, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IT! THAT HORROR HIS CLOTHES BELONGED TO CENTURIES PAST! I—I WONDER IF THESE HANDS HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIS COMING HERE? HE HAD NO HANDS OF HIS OWN!

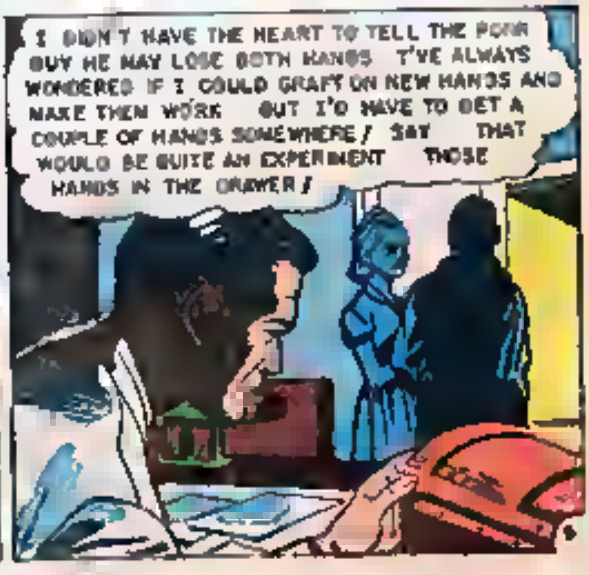

AS MACK PULLED THE BOX FROM HIS DRAWER, THE GIRL WHO WAS BOTH HIS OFFICE NURSE AND FIANCÉE CAME IN!
I'M BACK FROM LUNCH, MACK! OH MACK! DON'T TAKE THOSE HORRIBLE HANDS OUT! I HATE THEM! I WISH YOU'D GET RID OF THEM!

WHY WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OFFICE WHILE I WAS GONE! IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'D HAD A BATTLE HERE!
OH, JUST ONE OF THOSE PATIENTS WHO BELONGS IN A PADDED CELL! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF AND I GOT RID OF HIM!

THIS MUST BE YOUR DAY FOR STRANGE PATIENTS, DEAR! YOU HAVE ONE WAITING FOR YOU RIGHT NOW! THE GREAT GOLAN!
AND WHO IS THE GREAT GOLAN!

HE'S THAT CLEVER MAGICIAN WHO DOES THE MARVELOUS TRICKS! GETS HIMSELF OUT OF HANDCUFFS AND ALL THAT STUFF IT SEEMS IN GETTING OUT OF A PAIR OF HANDCUFFS HE INJURED HIS HANDS
WELL, SEND HIM IN!

THE GREAT GOLAN TOLD MACK HIS TROUBLES
MY DOCTOR SENT ME TO YOU HE SAID YOU HAD SPECIALIZED IN THINGS LIKE THIS MY HANDS ARE VITAL TO MY WORK YOU MUST RESTORE THEIR USE
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN BUT IT MEANS AN OPERATION—


I DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO TELL THE POOR GUY HE MAY LOSE BOTH HANDS I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED IF I COULD GRAFT ON NEW HANDS AND MAKE THEM WORK BUT I'D HAVE TO GET A COUPLE OF HANDS SOMEWHERE! SAY THAT WOULD BE QUITE AN EXPERIMENT THOSE HANDS IN THE DRAWER!

THE NEXT DAY, MACK RUSHED THE GREAT GOLAN TO THE HOSPITAL FOR AN EMERGENCY OPERATION. . .

I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, MACK! THOSE HANDS... ARE ALL OUT OF PROPORTION!

I NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE IT! NEW HANDS GRAFTED ON!

IF THIS SUCCEEDS... I'LL BE FAMOUS!

A FEW WEEKS LATER THE BANDAGES ON GOLAN'S HANDS WERE REMOVED

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SUCH A JOB HAS BEEN DONE!

THESE ARE MY HANDS? OH, NO! THESE MONSTROSITIES! MY HANDS WERE SUPPLE A MAGICIAN'S HANDS! IT WAS NECESSARY FOR MY TRICKS OF MAGIC!

THE HANDS SEEMED TO ACT OF THEIR OWN VOLITION AS GOLAN SWUNG AT MACK!

YOU HAVE RUINED ME! YOU AND YOUR EXPERIMENTS YOUR DREAMS OF DOING SOMETHING NO ONE HAS EVER DONE!

TAKE IT EASY!

NO! NO! WHAT AM I DOING? I AM NOT A KILLER! AND YET... I CANNOT STOP! MY HANDS REACH FOR YOUR THROAT... THEY WILL NOT LET GO!

UGHHHH!

HE IS DEAD! I KILLED HIM!

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HERE! MR. GOLAN! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND? EEEOOWWW!

AGAIN THE HANDS REACHED OUT, DRAGGING GOLAN WITH THEM

ARRGGHH

THE HANDS THEY ARE THROTTLING HER! I CANNOT STOP THEM!

MY HANDS! GIVE ME MY HANDS!

AIEEEE! WHO ARE YOU? GO AWAY! AM I NOT BEING TORTURED ENOUGH?

BY THE TIME THE CROWDS REACHED GOLAN'S DEAD BODY, THE FIGURE LEANING OVER HIM WAS GONE. THE HANDS THAT DR. MACK BOYLE HAD SO RECENTLY GRAFTED ONTO GOLAN AND THAT HAD BEEN CUT OFF BY THE STREET CAR, WERE NEVER FOUND.

AND IN A DESOLATE BURIAL GROUND IN ENGLAND A FIGURE OF STRANGE HORROR STARTED ON IT'S LAST JOURNEY.

THE END

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